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to be said that throughout he has brought out all that is of importance for church history and the history of dogma, and has set it in its true light.

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FRACTIO PANIS. La plus ancienne représentation du sacrifice eucharistique à la "cappella Greca" découverte et expliquée par MGR. JOSEPH WILPERT. Avec 17 planches et 20 figures dans le texte. Paris: Firmin-Didot et C^{ie}, 1896. Pp. xii+130 and Index. F. 30.

THE book before us is a comprehensive archæological demonstration concerning a newly discovered fresco in the catacomb of S. Priscilla at Rome, deserving careful attention from cover to cover. The author, a private secretary of Pope Leo XIII, is not only the most brilliant of the younger workers in Christian archæology at Rome, but combines a most painstaking and severe German scholarship with French acuteness; thus, though preparing this work entirely in his native German, he publishes also in French expressly to give it a wider circulation.

The title of the book is the name he has given to a certain fresco representing the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. Centuries long it lay hidden under a stony veil of stalactitic growth, which Wilpert's curiosity, faith, and triumphant perseverance safely removed. It held the place of honor above an arcosolium in the well-known chamber nicknamed by workmen not long ago the *cappella Greca* because of Greek inscriptions found near by. Wilpert not only regards this little room with its adjoining parts a tiny subterranean church of the early second century, but, what is still more noticeable, interprets the fresco as depicting symbolically the eucharistic feast at the moment when the bread is being broken by the bishop; hence the christening of the fresco *Fractio Panis*, one of the very oldest names for the sacrament of the Last Supper.

The accompanying series of frescoes in the little double chamber he explains as parts of an intentional dogmatic symbolism. As he proceeds, therefore, he makes use of various familiar historical references to confirm his judgment and to interpret his archæological discovery. The work is not that of a hasty enthusiast nor of an idealist; but, with the earnestness of conviction, it exhibits scholarly accuracy and balance.

In the main, Mgr. Wilpert has reached accurate conclusions. There was here surely a place suitable for worship. There are elsewhere in the Roman catacombs similar miniature basilicas or churches, if one rightly uses so marked a term for such humble structures. There is full reason to believe that this was such a place of Christian assembly.

The chronology also may be positively accepted. It is close reasoning, all must admit, and the links are many and small instead of startling evidence; but no faithful historical student can resist the aggregation of such circumstantial archæological detail. The primary construction must have been early in the second century, possibly even in the first. A wholly similar chronological problem approached quite independently in the Flavian crypt of the Domitilla complex yields the same result. So does the study of the Lucina crypt in Callixtus. The work in the *cappella Greca* is unquestionably of a very great antiquity.

Nor should we wonder that one so surrounded as is the writer of the *Fractio Panis* by liturgical services and ecclesiastical procedures should read into the early frescoes a liturgical meaning. And in a way he may be quite right in doing so. Even from our Protestant viewpoint, looking backward over centuries of sacramental church history, a sacramental thought in the frescoes is very easily discernible. But the meaning must be read from the viewpoint of the early believers themselves. May there not have been more directness, more biblical simplicity, and less of symbolic mysticism in the frescoes of the *cappella Greca* than Mgr. Wilpert would have us believe? The central thought, take them all together, is not the exaltation of the sacrament, but the exaltation of Jesus Christ himself. The loyalty of the early Christians to him in innumerable martyrdoms was a marvelous exhibit of faith. They believed, not like reasoning theologians, but like trustful children. Jesus Christ was supreme in their thought, but rather as a positive historic reality than as a mystic sacramental presence. There was nothing mystic in the picture of Daniel. It suggested an almighty deliverer, not a sacramental food. The Lazarus fresco signified a triumphant conqueror supreme over death. He who saw it thought of actual death and a positive resurrection near at hand when Christ should come, not a spiritual resurrection from sin through a mystic sacrament. There is no immediate evidence that the early church as a body apprehended the deeper subjective conceptions of the gospels. The sacrament of the *fractio panis* was a most precious memorial of Jesus Christ; through it he verily came near them, into them, with

mysterious mighty power of inner love and personality; but how do we know that they grasped it theologically in that early time? Even the apostles themselves, daily with him, by that very objective nearness, were prevented from that deep subjective participation of him, which the Holy Spirit gave them later, it is true, but to the church as a whole more gradually and progressively through the centuries. The early brethren were deeply spiritual in their attachment to the Lord, Jesus Christ. Mind, will, and heart, they were devoted to him. An intense personal loyalty filled them. Subjectively partaking him, the mass of them did not reason philosophically about this, for they felt him objectively near. True, Christ came through the sacrament, but they did not dwell upon the sacrament, but upon Christ himself. They knew and felt that Christ was the bread of life. That was the central thought, and they concerned themselves far less with the sacramental media. However mystically they were tempered by sacraments in all devotion and love, yet in the *fractio panis* fresco they saw and thought of the Christ-gift, not the hierarchic intercession; the fresco, with all its possible eucharistic meaning, was still Christ himself breaking bread, not the bishop presenting Christ.

And yet I am sorry to differ even thus much from Mgr. Wilpert, so important is it to encourage rather than disparage these pioneer efforts in archæological investigation into the Christian thought of the early second century. There should not enter into the criticism of such a work a single polemic syllable. In sending forth his volume, with its fine photographic illustrations and its remarkably clear, straightforward method, Mgr. Wilpert has performed a lasting service to Protestants as well as Roman Catholics.

This book is but a first fruit from the seed of the great De Rossi's incomparable preparatory labors in the field of Christian archæology. Ere long a mass of well-sifted historical facts will be forthcoming from the early Christian centuries. Another discovery, made this very winter, is warrant enough of what is certainly to come. Christian graffiti have been found in the traditional places of martyrdom near the Stadium and in the Forum, by the keen eyes of Dr. Broderick, an earnest American student. And close upon his discovery has followed, in January of this year, the remarkable identification, in the royal ruins of the Palatine, by Professor Marucchi (though even here Dr. Broderick should share the credit) of what purports to be graffiti of the first century itself.

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